

The NICHD Connection

May 2018

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

So What's It Like Being a...?	1
Letter from the Editor	2
The Rep Report	16
Life Outside Lab	17
Upcoming NIH-Wide OITE Events	18
May Announcements	19
May Events	22

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Shana R. Spindler, PhD
Shana.Spindler@gmail.com

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Nichole Swan

CAREER ROUND TABLE PHOTOS

Jeremy Swan

LIFE OUTSIDE LAB PHOTOS

Meredith Daly
Jeremy Swan

BACKGROUND PHOTOGRAPHY

See **Credits page** online

CONTRIBUTORS

2018 Career Round Table participants
Suna Gulay, PhD

So What's It Like Being a...? 2018 CAREER ROUND TABLE RECAPS

With a career-focused theme for the Fourteenth Annual Fellows Retreat, the retreat planning committee arranged an outstanding line up of former fellows with diverse career paths. For those who were unable to attend (or just want a nice recap), all of the career speakers submitted answers to the three most-common questions asked during their career round table discussions.

This year, NICHD fellows had the opportunity to chat with ten different scientific professionals in unique lines of work. Check out what they each had to say!

Academe/Research: Dylan Burnette, PhD
(Vanderbilt University) Page 3

Consulting: Samantha Crowe, PhD
(Evalia Consulting) Page 4

Grants Management: Erin Gray, PhD
(NIMH) Page 6

Science Education: Faith Harrow Plante, PhD
(NHGRI) Page 7

Academe/Teaching: Stephanie Justice-Bitner, PhD
(King's College) Page 8

Industry: Nikki Keasey, PhD
(vivoPharm LLC) Page 9

Medical Science Liaison: Christopher McNabb, PhD
(Bayer U.S., LLC) Page 11

Science Communication: Abby Robinson, PhD
(University of Maryland) Page 12

Industry: Jyothsna Visweswaraiah, PhD
(Pandion Therapeutics) Page 13

Technology Transfer/Science Education: Robert Walker, PhD
(NIAMS) Page 14

(continued on page 3)

Letter from the Editor

As I brainstormed ways to write about this year's fellows retreat theme—scientific careers—I kept coming back to a single word: community. Every retreat speaker discussed the importance of community. A new career that began with a phone call from a former colleague. An informational interview that led to a permanent position. The possibility of getting new cancer drugs to patients that depended on strong professional relationships. I could go on and cite an example from each person I met.

We operate within a community of friends, family, and colleagues. The individuals who surround us will influence who we become in our professional lives. I frequently affirm that the NIH is one of the best places to train in science. And I usually refer to the great technology, resources, workshops, seminars, and detail opportunities on campus. But I've neglected to talk about the most important benefit of being at the NIH. Look at the people around you. You are among brilliant, productive, competent individuals—it's a great group to have in your corner. Do not miss the opportunity to connect with, learn from, and grow with this community.

If I've done my job, many of you are now frantically looking through your retreat notes for new contacts. Or maybe you're seriously regretting not going to the retreat this year! Either way, we're here to help. In this issue, each of the career speakers shares answers to [three frequently asked questions](#) from the retreat. You'll also find our monthly "[Rep Report](#)" column, pictures from this year's [Take Your Child to Work Day/Earth Day](#) celebrations, plus several [May announcements](#) and [events](#).

After the retreat, I bumped into a fellow who said, jokingly, that he'd submit a "See Spot Run" letter to the editor. I encouraged him to send it—it's never silly to connect with your colleagues. After learning that I work remotely from Las Vegas, Nevada, the fellow formulated this little ditty, based on a popular phrase from American children's literature:

See Spot run.
See Spot run fast.
See Spot run back to Vegas.

All the best,
The guy in the Hawaiian shirt

Thank you, Hawaiian shirt guy. Although, I didn't run back that fast! It's a great community—I was in no hurry to leave too quickly.

Your Editor in Chief,
Shana R. Spindler, PhD

Share your comments and ideas with your community by sending a letter to our Editor at Shana.Spindler@gmail.com.

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 1)

DYLAN T. BURNETTE, PhD

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CELL AND DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

WHAT I DO

I am a cell biologist by training and have been working on the cellular cytoskeleton for about 20 years. My lab is currently focused on how contractile assemblies function during cell motility, cell division and muscle development.

FUN FACT

I design and manufacture women's scarves based on photographs I have taken through the microscope, so technically I am a fashion designer.

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

What do you need to get job interviews?

The answer to this question is deceptively simple. You need solid publications and something else.

Solid publications: *Cell*, *Science* and *Nature* can lead you on the way to greatness. But do not despair if this is not in the cards for you. It is definitely not the only path and not the path that I followed. Not that I did not try to publish in the "Big Three" (darn you Reviewer #3...). Instead, I published several first author papers in journals that were well respected in my field. Do that, and you will be fine.

Something else: bringing money with you into a new position is a good "something" to shoot for. Make sure you apply for a K99/R00 transition grant or something similar. Such mechanisms provide you a big advantage over other candidates. Again, don't despair if you fail to get it. Go seek out some other national/international recognition. Almost all scientific societies have awards for postdocs. Once you get your first postdoctoral paper, start applying for awards. Most of these awards are only given to one postdoc. That makes them prestigious and competitive, so apply to as many as you can find. Needless to say, if you have something else that makes you special, leverage it.

How many jobs did you apply for?

I have heard stories of people applying for more than 60 positions. That seems almost impossible to me. Even if you can pull it off, it would be a real burden on those writing your recommendation letters. I ended up applying



Dylan Burnette, PhD

(continued on page 4)

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 3)

(DYLAN T. BURNETTE, PhD)

to 18 schools, and even that was all-consuming. Each application you send should make it clear how you would contribute to each individual department. It would be very hard to customize your application for 60 schools. Even at 18, I was not able to customize every application. Not surprisingly, the schools that interviewed me correlated well with how much time I had put in on their applications.

What happens when you do not get a job?

Many people voiced concern over what happens when a job search does not end up with a principal investigator position in academia. Given that possibility, you should have plans for a different direction. However, it is a fallacy that a failed job search means that you are out of academia for good. I was acutely aware during the session that we were surrounded by nine other discussion tables being headed by scientists doing diverse and highly interesting jobs. They are obtaining knowledge, experience and skill sets that those of us who work exclusively in academia do not have. It is likely that many will return to academia to perform research in their areas—policy was particularly on my mind after the inspiring keynote presentation by Dr. Yvette Seger—and educate the next generation of scientists.

SAMANTHA CROWE, PhD

FOUNDER AND CEO

EVALIA CONSULTING LLC

WHAT I DO

I am a personal and professional growth coach, leadership adviser, and strategy consultant. Through my work, I help empower individuals and organizations to reach their goals through coaching, vision setting, and strategy mapping.

FUN FACT

I'm obsessed with food trucks, out-smarting my children, and growing houseplants—in that order.

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

What skills are useful for being a successful consultant?

Many types of consulting exist, each with its own set of success factors. Certain skills, however, will propel you forward regardless of the consulting type you choose. For example, managing projects effectively is important, and additional training can build on your existing project

(continued on page 5)



Samantha Crowe, PhD

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 4)

(SAMANTHA CROWE, PhD)

management skills to prepare you for a business setting. You will also facilitate meetings, build client relationships, and inform decision makers as a consultant. To boost your skills in these areas, consider learning more about facilitation and influencing.

Scientists I've led often struggled in two areas: communication and collaboration. This may seem counterintuitive because as a scientist, you communicate and collaborate a lot. As you leave academia, though, the context, pace, audience, and even "language" change. It can feel as though you've arrived on a new planet. Having an open mindset helps, as does being willing to "relearn" ways of doing things. You can also prepare by taking advantage of relevant training, mentorship, and intern or volunteer opportunities.

What does a consultant's typical day look like?

It depends on what type of consulting you are doing. For example, are you sitting at the client's work site to augment their program staff, or are you working with multiple clients on a variety of specific projects? Are you in an independent contributor role or a team leader? Are your clients from the public or private sector? To understand the day-to-day life of a consultant, consider speaking with individuals from a variety of firms and roles. Having said this, in general, most consulting work requires spending a lot of time communicating back and forth with your client, listening to their needs and generating ideas about how your company can solve them. You'll also conduct some type of data gathering and analysis—surveys, interviews, market research, landscape analyses, literature searches, and so on. You'll likely write reports, business development proposals, or recommendation briefings, and consultants are often known for their vast numbers of "decks" (also known as slide presentations). Finally, be prepared to spend a lot of time in meetings to coordinate with your project teams, leadership, managers, staff, and clients.

What skills from your grad/postdoc training have come in handy in your professional life?

I'm grateful for many skills I learned as a graduate student and postdoc. Being able to research any topic and look at information critically has been invaluable. Knowing I can stand in front of diverse audiences and give compelling presentations has also come in handy. But if I had to pick one thing I gained from my life as a scientist that has propelled me forward, it would be my ability to live in a state of curiosity and experimentation. I ask questions constantly to understand what is going on and determine what new ideas or solutions are needed. I don't get upset when things fail or don't work out as planned because my first reaction is, "OK, what did we learn, and how do we use this information to tweak things moving forward?" Having an approach grounded in curiosity and focused on learning and solutions is valued highly by leaders and organizations.

(continued on page 6)

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 5)

ERIN GRAY, PhD
SCIENTIFIC REVIEW OFFICER

WHAT I DO

I administer the peer review of grant applications for the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). This involves reading grant applications, recruiting appropriate scientists to critically evaluate each application, and running the review meeting.

FUN FACT

I won a triathlon.

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

What is the difference between a Program Officer (PO) and a Scientific Review Officer (SRO)?

The major difference between POs and SROs is the use of their scientific background. While both have PhDs and usually postdoctoral training, POs tend to apply their scientific expertise to a focused scientific area while SROs stretch their expertise across a broader range of scientific topics.

POs are closely involved with writing "Funding Opportunity Announcements." These announcements request the submission of grant applications that align with a specific expertise and promote the mission of the Institute. Also, POs interact with scientists in their field to help them apply for research funding.

Once the NIH receives grant applications, the SRO steps in and manages the peer review process, to ensure that applications are fairly evaluated by a panel of scientific experts. At NIMH, an SRO may manage the review of **any** grant application related to mental health, and this may require intensive research to identify the best scientists for the review panel; SROs need to understand the science in a grant application well enough to identify the expertise required to evaluate it. During this recruitment and running of the review, SROs interact with and get to know high-level scientists across many fields.

How did you get training to be a Scientific Review Officer?

While an intramural postdoctoral fellow at NICHD, I performed an office detail in the NIMH Review Branch of the Division of Extramural Activities. Prior to

(continued on page 7)



Erin Gray, PhD

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 6)

(ERIN GRAY, PhD)

starting, I discussed it with my lab PI, and we agreed that I would spend three days per week on detail for four months. During this time, I shadowed an SRO through each step of the review process: from the time the applications were received through the entire review in our office. This included helping to administer the in-person review meeting. At the end of my detail, I attended NIMH's Advisory Council where the final funding decisions were made.

How did you find your office detail opportunity?

I found my ideal office detail after talking with many, many people at informational interviews, attending all sorts of career panels, and discussing options with Dr. Yvette Pittman at the NICHD Office of Education. Talking to a wide variety of professionals was the biggest help in narrowing down my preferred career. People didn't seem to mind talking with me about their career path and were able to let me know about detail opportunities in their respective offices. Over time, I focused on grant administration. Ultimately, I found my office detail because I was introduced to NIMH's Chief of Scientific Review after an informational interview with an SRO.

FAITH HARROW PLANTE, PhD

TRAINING DIRECTOR

NATIONAL HUMAN GENOME RESEARCH INSTITUTE, NIH

WHAT I DO

I work with a team that provides professional support to early career scientists, to enhance their NIH training experience, and to help them transition to the next stage of their careers. I also work to encourage the participation of underrepresented groups in biomedical research, in our training programs.

FUN FACT

I learned to ride a bicycle at the age of 31.

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

How did you transition to your current position as NHGRI Training Director?

As a postdoctoral fellow, I accepted several invitations from the NHGRI Intramural Training Office (ITO) to speak to K-12 and undergraduate students about my research. I also served on an ITO advisory committee on diversifying the biomedical workforce. When a position opened up at ITO, I had already interacted quite a bit with the staff, and combined with my undergraduate teaching experience, I was a competitive applicant for the job.



Faith Harrow Plante, PhD

(continued on page 8)

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 7)

(FAITH HARROW PLANTE, PhD)

What is your typical day like?

My typical day varies, but in general, my responsibilities include attending training-related meetings, keeping up with literature on trends in grad student/postdoctoral training and biomedical workforce diversity, developing and overseeing career building programs/activities, managing the office budget, conducting trainee orientations and exit interviews, meeting with trainees, speaking to students about the NIH, and if I'm lucky, I get to extract strawberry DNA with elementary and middle school students. Very much like the lab environment, my work schedule is quite flexible. Typically, I have a number of tasks to complete within a time frame and my priority is to get them done.

Do you miss working in the lab?

Yes and no. The one aspect that I do miss from working in the lab is conducting experiments. Flow cytometry was my favorite technique. I don't miss anything else.

STEPHANIE JUSTICE-BITNER, PhD

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY

KING'S COLLEGE, WILKES-BARRE, PENNSYLVANIA

WHAT I DO

I teach 12 credits each semester, mentor undergraduate researchers, and provide advice to students on career paths.

FUN FACT

I love to color my hair—pink, purple, blue, green. It was quite subdued at the retreat.

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

What kind of funding do you get to do research?

My institution provided a \$5,000 start up and provides \$500 per research student per semester. The college also has internal grants for summer research. Funding is also available from smaller foundations and organizations. We don't have the facilities to apply for NIH grants.



Stephanie Justice-Bitner, PhD

(continued on page 9)

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 8)

(STEPHANIE JUSTICE-BITNER, PhD)

How do I get teaching experience?

I suggest using adjunct positions for experience (a couple of semesters), then try applying for visiting professor positions. When you do adjunct, put in the time necessary to perform well and make a good impression on permanent faculty.

What is most rewarding about your job?

It's definitely not the money. For me, it's the interactions with my students. Having students that I've taught stop by to chat or share a scientific news story that they've read makes me feel that I'm doing something meaningful with my life. Mentoring undergraduate researchers gives me the opportunity to see the pride that they have in the work they have done. King's College also has a tradition of the faculty lining up on either side of processioning graduates. Many students will come up to me and thank me or hug me.

NIKKI KEASEY, PhD

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
VIVOPHARM

WHAT I DO

My company is a contract research organization. We run preclinical studies, mostly using murine oncology models to test novel cancer drugs. I focus on the in vitro components of these studies, especially using flow cytometry to assess the immune modulatory effects of these new therapies.

FUN FACT

My grandparents were born Amish on my mother's side of the family, and on my father's side my grandparents were black bumper Mennonite. At some of my family reunions, buggies outnumber cars! At my paternal grandfather's funeral, the church was divided by gender, with women and children on one side and men on the other.



Nikki Keasey, PhD

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

Is a postdoc required to get a job like yours?

While a postdoc is not absolutely required to become a study director or principal investigator, for me it was a necessary step. I did not have any animal handling skills from my graduate work, and I was able to gain those skills during my postdoctoral years. This is what made me a good fit for my current job. However, if my graduate

(continued on page 10)

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 9)

(NIKKI KEASEY, PhD)

work had introduced me to small animal studies, I may have been a good fit without a postdoc. So, my answer is that it depends on the particulars of the job, and your graduate work and other job experience. I also feel that smaller companies like vivoPharm are less focused on this requirement than larger companies would be.

Was it difficult to find a part-time job in science?

I was full time when I originally joined my company, and I stayed in that position for several years before approaching management about a transition to part-time. I had established a strong relationship with the company, and they had invested years into training me to perform highly specialized techniques, such as mouse mastectomies and orthotopic inoculations into the liver, pancreas, third and fourth mammary glands, and tibia. My value to the company and my relationship with my team meant that they were willing to modify the terms of my contract to help me get my work/life balance back in order. The flexibility that they have shown to me is a two-way street. When the needs of the company demand that I work longer hours in order to make a large experiment happen, I rearrange my schedule to get it done. When a family situation pops up that requires me to take time off unexpectedly, they make it work. So, while I don't think that there are many positions that start out as part time, I think that there should be because it has proven to be mutually beneficial for my employer and myself.

Is your job scientifically challenging, or does it ever become repetitive?

I talk a lot about my role designing and performing flow cytometry experiments, because this is a big part of what I do. However, new things are always of interest as our clients in pharma evolve their approaches to tackling cancer. Recently, there has been a shift away from drug response assays using two-dimensional cell culture and towards assays using a more physiologically relevant three-dimensional culture model. I was assigned the task of developing and testing methods for establishing these 3-D cultures. And I designed specialized assays that can handle the 3-D spheroid core's lack of exposure to surrounding fluids. My company is constantly evolving our offerings based on the needs of our clients, and this evolution means that I do not have time to get bored with my work. Also, the flow cytometry studies that take up much of my time are fun to design, and I rarely run the same exact panel twice. Creating and optimizing flow panels tailored to the proposed mechanism of action of each new drug appeals to my puzzle-solving nature and keeps me tied to current immuno-oncology literature. Sometimes a little repetition would be a welcome break!

(continued on page 11)

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 10)

CHRIS McNABB, PhD

MEDICAL SCIENCE LIAISON, ONCOLOGY
BAYER US LLC

WHAT I DO

My primary responsibility is to travel within my geography to meet with local oncologists and serve as their in-person resource for medical and scientific information from Bayer. I also coordinate company research initiatives by liaising with research sites/doctors' offices, collect real-world feedback from clinicians and researchers to share with the company, identify potential scientific opportunities for the company, and attend major scientific meetings to stay informed of the latest research and trends.

FUN FACT

In my spare time, I host and attend whisky tastings for and with friends.

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

What does a Medical Science Liaison (MSL) actually do?

MSL's arrange meetings with healthcare providers in a given geography, schedule travel arrangements for those meetings, and then lead those meetings. Discussion topics usually include the latest research findings, details about the practice's organization, research interests/capabilities, and real-world treatment trends. Through these meetings, the MSL becomes the scientific face of the company. The benefit of this is that the company develops a deep understanding of doctors' offices and real-world practices in order to inform future research trials and company strategy. MSL's also attend major scientific conferences to collect the latest research findings and report those back to their colleagues.

How do I transition from a basic preclinical scientist to an MSL?

This transition requires the applicant to develop key skills that are essential to the MSL role. These skills include presentation/teaching skills, interpersonal communication skills, scientific fluency in your field, and the ability to learn science extremely quickly. Applicants can gain these skills by presenting at their lab's journal clubs, teaching courses, and mentoring newer lab members. Then applicants must tailor their resumes to highlight these skills and, during interviews, make a convincing argument that you could easily translate the skills to the MSL role.

(continued on page 12)



Chris McNabb, PhD

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 11)

(CHRIS McNABB, PhD)

How big is your territory and how often do you travel?

This varies widely between MSL positions and is something applicants should definitely explore before applying to a position. In my current role, my territory is MD/DC/VA/WV. I spend between one to three nights per week away from home in hotels. For major conferences, sometimes four nights may be required. I personally find this to be easily manageable, but each applicant's situation will be different depending on family, pets, fondness for airports, etc. Anyone interested in this career path should know that the "on the road" lifestyle is very different from that of bench science.

ABBY ROBINSON, PhD

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS/SCIENCE WRITER

WHAT I DO

I lead communications efforts for the College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences at the University of Maryland. One of my major responsibilities is to make sure the world hears about our scientists' research discoveries and innovations.

FUN FACT

I served as editor-in-chief of the yearbook at the University of Maryland while I was an undergraduate bioengineering major.



Abby Robinson, PhD

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

Do I need to go back to school to pursue a career as a science writer?

No, but there are educational opportunities available if you're interested. For example, the University of California, Santa Cruz; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; New York University; and Boston University offer science writing programs. If you're still in school, look for science writing classes and/or journalism courses on campus that you can take.

What do I need to get a job in science writing?

Clips! You need a portfolio of writing samples (at least five to be safe). A variety of different writing styles can also come in handy (e.g., articles highlighting research results vs. scientist profiles). Start a blog, write for NIH publications (like this one!), volunteer at a local museum and/or write for your professional society. If you're still in school, volunteer to write for the school newspaper, your department newsletter or the university research news office.

(continued on page 13)

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 12)

(ABBY ROBINSON, PhD)

What do you think was the most valuable skill you learned as a scientist?

The most important, translatable skill I learned in graduate school was the ability to pick up and read any scientific journal article—at least the abstract, introduction and conclusion—and have a general idea of the purpose of the study, the major finding(s), and implication(s)/importance of the result(s).

JYOTHSNA VISWESWARAIAH, PhD

SCIENTIST

PANDION THERAPEUTICS

WHAT I DO

I'm a protein biochemist who makes and tests therapeutic proteins for treating autoimmune diseases.

FUN FACT

I climbed Mount Doom (Mt. Ngauruhoe) and Mount Mordor (Mt. Tongariro).

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

As a researcher doing basic research, how am I qualified for jobs in applied fields like pharma?

Skills are transferable from basic to applied research in fields such as pharma. Unlike in academia, in an industrial setting there are teams who collaborate to get a project to completion. Teams of people who work together on a project include individuals from molecular biology, antibody discovery, protein production and purification, quality control, immunology, etc. As long as you have about 60% of skill set overlap with the advertised job, you should apply to that job. Tailor your resume to every job you apply. Don't send a generic resume. Highlight your experience that is most relevant to the job.

What do you do at work? Are you at the bench a lot? Do you have to read a lot of papers?

At work, I spend a majority of time in the lab doing cell culture work, assay development, and expressing, purifying and quality controlling proteins. I also spend a significant amount of time researching targets our company should pursue in the near future. I then present my analysis along with information about any available reagents (cell lines, functional assays, other reagents like antibodies) to the senior management team who then make the decision.



Jyothsna
Visweswaraiah, PhD

(continued on page 14)

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 13)

(JYOTHSNA VISWESWARAIAH, PhD)

I read a few papers for researching targets; however, I read more patents than papers for research in my current job.

What is a good job search strategy?

Two tips:

1. Start early! Looking for a job is a stressful process, and if you have a looming deadline it makes the process more traumatic. Another advantage of starting early is that you will get enough practice with interviews to help you frame better responses.
2. Network as much as possible and keep in touch with the contacts. Don't just add a bunch of contacts on LinkedIn and not follow-up. You aren't limited to networking only at networking events; joining groups and societies can be a great way to meet people and grow your network.

ROBERT C. WALKER, JR., PhD

CHIEF, CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH BRANCH
NIAMS, IRP

WHAT I DO

I serve as the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin (NIAMS) Intramural Research Program Training Director, and also the Technology Development Coordinator for NIAMS (Technology Transfer).

FUN FACT

I am a member of the Affordable Rock and Roll Act (ARRA), where I play the keys. The ARRA consists of distinguished NIH tenured scientists, clinicians, biologists, postdocs, and postbacs. We are a "free band," hence the name, but we always rock the house!

TOP THREE RETREAT QUESTIONS

When is the best time to begin searching for positions?

It is important to concentrate on the research focus of your laboratory, and it is important to publish as much as possible during your time in the lab. Before coming to the NIH for a postdoc, predoc, or a postbac fellowship, each trainee has ideas about his/her future

(continued on page 15)



Robert C. Walker, Jr., PhD

So What's It Like Being a...?

(continued from page 14)

(ROBERT C. WALKER, JR., PhD)

goals in the field of biomedical sciences. It is important to dedicate time each year to evaluate if you are moving in the right direction for your future goals and obtain the needed skills in order to transition forward. I would recommend starting your job search early, starting after the first year of your fellowship, and more aggressively during the third and fourth years. Your fellowship time will go by quickly, so utilize the programming from your training office, other NIH Institutes and Centers training offices, and the NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education early and often to begin planning for your next steps.

What tips would I suggest for looking for positions?

The first step is to effectively use the Independent Development Plan tool (various models are available) to identify your training and career goals, respectively. This tool will allow you to have organized conversations and receive valuable input from your mentor(s), training office(s), OITE, etc. I would also recommend engaging in informational interviews and details/ internships. These actions will increase your professional networking, which will be beneficial for you, the trainee. All of these activities take dedicated time and concentrated effort.

How can I make myself a better candidate for a position away from bench research?

In short, try to gain experience when and wherever possible. A few possibilities include:

- » Attending seminars and workshops hosted by the various NIH training offices on campus
- » Volunteering within a policy office
- » Serving as an ad-hoc scientific member for a non-profit organization
- » Serving on planning committees for annual retreats
- » Volunteering your services for NIH interest groups
- » Serving on the NIH Felcom committee

Each opportunity is a chance to gain experience outside the lab. You are a scientist—be creative, continue to think outside of the box in your search for your future position(s)!

The Rep Report

By Suna Gulay, PhD

As the current NICHD Basic Sciences Representative, I represent NICHD postdoctoral fellows at the NIH Fellows Committee (FelCom) meeting every month and share the latest news with you here. Do you have a concern or question that you want brought up at the next meeting? Contact me at suna.gulay@nih.gov!



The NIH Career Symposium is here and will be held on May 18, 2018. This is a great event to learn about various career paths through hour-long Q&A sessions. The list of career paths that will be featured includes academia, tech transfer/patent law, science communication, industry, consulting, and grants administration. The event concludes with “skill blitzes”: 20-40 minute sessions full of career and job search tips. The symposium will take place at the Natcher Conference Center on the Bethesda campus. Attend a single session or attend the whole event. You can find the full schedule [here](#) and register [here](#).

FelCom needs your help setting up online platforms to ensure fellows hear about all area events and have convenient access to all resources they may need throughout their training. Join the *ad hoc* Public Relations Subcommittee; help us create content and share your ideas on how to connect NIH postdoctoral fellows. This project is expected to be completed in six months, so no long-term commitment is necessary. Email me for more information.

FelCom’s [Mentoring Subcommittee](#) is looking for new members. This committee aims for all NIH trainees to optimize their interactions with mentors and find new ones as needed. The committee regularly organizes events through OITE (for example, “Speaking Up: How to Ask for What You Need in Lab and Life,” “Workplace Dynamics,” and “Improving Mentoring Relationships”). Email the co-chairs Nivedita Sengupta (nivedita.sengupta@nih.gov) and Gloria Laryea (gloria.laryea@nih.gov) to join.



Life Outside Lab
*NIH's 24th Annual
"Take Your Child to Work Day"
& NIH Earth Day Celebration*

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2018

PHOTOS BY JEREMY SWAN AND MEREDITH DALY



Upcoming NIH-Wide OITE Events

To register, please follow the links below:

TUESDAY, MAY 8, 12 – 1:30 PM

[Tips on Filling Out Your AMCAS Application](#)

Building 40, Room 1201

Speaker(s): Elena Hernández-Ramón, MD/PhD, Director, Pre-medical Program, OITE

MONDAY, MAY 14, 1 – 3 PM

[Grant Writing for Future Graduate Students](#)

Building 1, Wilson Hall

Speaker(s): Sharon Milgram, PhD, Director, OITE

TUESDAY, MAY 15, & WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 10 AM – 12 NOON

[2018 Summer Research Mentor Training](#)

Building 60 (Cloisters), Lecture Room 142

Speaker(s): Elena Hernández-Ramón, MD/PhD, Director, Pre-medical Program, OITE

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 8:30 AM – 4:15 PM

[11th Annual NIH Career Symposium](#)

Natcher Conference Center, Building 45

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 10 AM – 12 NOON

[Tune in and Take Care: Managing Stress and Promoting Wellbeing](#)

Building 40, Room 1201

Speaker(s): Michael Sheridan, PhD, OITE Special Advisor for Diversity and Wellness Programs

THURSDAY, MAY 24, & FRIDAY, MAY 25, 8 AM – 5 PM

[Management Boot Camp May 2018](#)

Have You Visited the NICHD Fellows Wiki? It's a One-Stop Shop!

Through the "[Fellows @ NICHD](#)" wiki, you'll always have access to the following NICHD Office of Education activities and resources:

[Three-Minute Talks](#)

[Mentor of the Year Awards](#)

[Grants Administration Guidelines for NICHD, DIR](#)

[NICHD Fellows Intramural Grants Supplement \(FIGS\) Award](#)

[Office of Education Activities](#)

[Funding Opportunities for NIH Intramural Fellows](#)

[The NICHD Connection](#)

[Responsible Conduct of Research Training](#)

[Orientation Resources](#)

[Resume Hour for Fellows](#)

[Intramural Research Fellowship for NICHD Fellows](#)



May Announcements

ENHANCE YOUR COLLEGE TEACHING SKILLS THIS SUMMER

The Annual Lilly Conference on Evidence-based Teaching and Learning

May 31–June 3, 2018 in Bethesda

If you are considering a teaching career, this conference may be a great fit for you! The mission of the Lilly Conference is to provide a forum to share and model a scholarly approach to teaching and learning that reports quality student learning outcomes while promoting professional development of faculty.

Conference participants include faculty and administrators at various stages in their academic careers. They come from across the United States, representing nearly every discipline found in higher education. This is an opportunity for faculty to discuss, critique, and improve teaching and learning within their campuses. The meeting offers a variety of sessions so that participants can match their learning preferences to the presentation formats: 100-minute workshops, 50-minute sessions, 20-minute discussions, traditional plenary addresses, 30-minute round table discussions, and poster sessions.

For more information about the conference, visit:

<http://www.lillyconferences-md.com>

Please contact Dr. Yvette Pittman (yvette.pittman@nih.gov) by Friday, May 11 if you are interested in attending. Last year, the Office of Education sponsored two NICHD postdocs to attend.

(continued on page 21)

May Announcements

(continued from page 20)

SAVE THE DATE: POSTBAC FAREWELL

ALL POSTBACS ARE WELCOME!

Please save the date of **Monday, June 4, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.** for our postbac farewell event.

We want to celebrate your accomplishments and applaud you on your acceptances into professional school. This is a great opportunity for you to network with each other. Plus, there will be a raffle with gifts from the NIH store, and tasty desserts to enjoy!

The top three NICHD presenters from Postbac Poster Day (May 2) will also be announced at this event.

This event will be held in **Bldg. 31, conference room 2A48 (A-wing, 2nd floor).**

Please contact Dr. Yvette Pittman (yvette.pittman@nih.gov) if you plan to come. ***Also, if you have been accepted into either medical or graduate school, we would love to know where you are headed. Feel free to include this in your RSVP email to Dr. Pittman.***

APPLYING FOR ACADEMIC JOBS?

New Series Coming this Summer!

The NICHD is excited to be hosting Lauren Celano of [Propel Careers](#) for a new series that will help you prepare for the academic job search and help you prepare your application materials, including CV, research and teaching statements, and cover letter. This series will consist of two presentations, followed by individual coaching sessions where you will have the opportunity to work with Lauren one-on-one to prepare your application materials.

PREPARING FOR THE ACADEMIC JOB SEARCH

This talk will cover how you can build experiences during your postdoctoral training, so you are a competitive applicant for an academic position. Examples will be provided for research intensive, teaching intensive, and combined research/teaching intensive roles.

PREPARING APPLICATION MATERIALS FOR ACADEMIC JOB APPLICATIONS

This talk will cover information that should be included in academic application materials (CV, research and teaching statements, and cover letter) and how to showcase your experiences. Examples will also be provided.

INDIVIDUAL COACHING SESSIONS

You will have the opportunity to sign up for coaching sessions with Lauren Celano for individual help and feedback on your application materials.

Keep an eye on your inbox—more information to follow very soon! Please contact Dr. Yvette Pittman (yvette.pittman@nih.gov) if you would like to register for this series.

May Events

WEDNESDAY, MAY 2, 10 AM – 3:30 PM
Postbac Poster Day 2018

Natcher Conference Center (Building 45)

Postbac Poster Day provides an opportunity for postbacs to share the research they have been conducting at the NIH and at the same time develop their communication and networking skills. For more information, visit https://www.training.nih.gov/postbac_poster_day.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8 & TUESDAY, MAY 29, 12 – 1:30 PM
Lunch and Learn Seminar Series
NIH Extramural Grants/Transitioning to an Academic Career
NICHD Extramural Office: 6710B Rockledge, Room 1427

This is a four-part series sponsored by the NICHD Office of Health Equity aimed to educate fellows about the NIH extramural research and training enterprise, its staff, and research portfolios. Each session will address a specific topic, including an overview of the extramural program, various funding mechanisms, and the grants cycle (submission and review). Fellows will also have the opportunity to meet and interact with NICHD extramural staff who have successful careers as scientific review officers, program officers, and policy analysts.

The first two sessions of this series will be held this month. Information about the last two sessions will be announced soon. Come with questions and feel free to bring your lunch!

Session 1: Overview of the NIH Extramural Program and Eligibility Criteria for Grant Applications (Wednesday, May 8)

Speaker: Dennis Twombly, PhD, Deputy Director, Office of Extramural Policy and Extramural Training Officer, Division of Extramural Research (DER)

Session 2: Understanding and Interpreting Funding Opportunity Announcements (Tuesday, May 29)

Speaker: David Weinberg, PhD, Project Lead for the Human Placenta Project and Program Official, Contraceptive Research Branch, DER

Please email Dr. Yvette Pittman (yvette.pittman@nih.gov) if you would like to attend.

(continued on page 23)

May Events

(continued from page 22)

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 10 AM – 12 NOON

Grant Writing Training Session for 2018 IRF Applicants

For all prospective applicants

Bldg. 31, conference room 2A48 (A-wing, 2nd floor)

The NICHD Division of Intramural Research has launched a competitive research funding opportunity for NICHD postdoctoral, visiting, and clinical fellows—the Intramural Research Fellowships (IRFs).

This training session will cover various components of an NIH grant, details about the application and review processes, and tips on preparing a full application.

Attendance at this training session is a requirement for IRF submission. The application deadline is **August 6, 2018**.

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Fellows Social Networking Event

[Tapp'd](#), 4915 Saint Elmo Ave., Bethesda

This is a great opportunity for the NICHD fellows community to socialize and network with each other *(with good food!)* in an enjoyable environment. All current trainees within the institute are welcome.

Please send Dr. Yvette Pittman (yvette.pittman@nih.gov) a quick note if you plan to attend this event.

(continued on page 24)

May Events

(continued from page 23)

THURSDAY, MAY 31, 1:30 – 3 PM

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) mandatory training
“Discussion of Ethical Research Practices: Making Good Choices”
Building 31, conference room 2A48 (A-wing, 2nd floor)

Mandatory for all NICHD fellows who started after January 1, 2017.

As part of the new RCR requirements, all NICHD fellows must complete eight hours of training within their initial two years. Led by Dr. Erin Walsh, this session will begin with a brief discussion of pre-assigned reading materials, followed by small group, team-based learning exercises involving research ethics cases that promote discussions of fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. It will end with a discussion on good practices of data management and presentation, including lab notebooks—both physical and electronic.

Reading assignments and case studies will be sent by email prior to the session. ***Please contact Dr. Yvette Pittman (yvette.pittman@nih.gov) by Monday, May 21, if you are planning to attend this RCR training offering.***